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145 Reminders in stone

New veterans monument dedication Saturday

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This time, the monument was made possible by an unknown soldier and not about one.

While there are several monuments in the United States honoring "unknown soldiers" who died unidentified in battle, the monument in Barnwell is about a known soldier.

However, the benefactor who made the monument possible remains anonymous, hence unknown. The benefactor is also a Vietnam veteran.

Right now the monument is wrapped in plastic tarp and mystery to the walkers making laps around the Veterans Memorial Park

walking trail

The marker honors Army Staff Sgt Jared C Monti of Abington, Mass. Monti was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, the highest award a soldier can receive, for his actions in Afghanistan in 2006.

Monti was leading 16-man patrol in the Nuristan province, Afghanistan, June 21, 2006 when they were attacked by 50 fighters.

Monti's group took cover behind a rock formation while he called in fire support to repel the attack. At one point, Monti fought the enemy personally with his rifle and a grenade.

Discovering one soldier was wounded and exposed to enemy fire, Monti tried three times to rescue the soldier before being killed.

Monti was a member of the 71st Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Squadron and 3rd Brigade Combat Team with the 10th Mountain Division.

On April 10, the marker will be wrapped in red, white and blue before it is unveiled. The monument will be the centerpiece of the public event, which starts at 10:30 a.m.

Why was a marker created to be a permanent fixture of Veterans Memorial Park when the soldier it honors has no connection to Barnwell County and Monti was not a member of the 173rd Airborne?

A Vietnam veteran who served with the 173rd Airborne and lives in this region approached the Salkehatchie 828 chapter of the Vietnam Veterans of America and said he would pay for the monument if it was located here, said Eddie Hair, one of the organizers of the event. Hair also served with the 173rd Airborne during the Vietnam conflict.

However, the Vietnam veteran wished to remain anonymous. He has also contributed to Veterans Memorial Park in the past, Hair said.

Around 1999 or 2000



Eddie Hair, left, and Chris Pritchard take a peek at the monument's base stone before lowering it in place.

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Monument: *Dedication service April 10*

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Monti helped members of the 173rd Airborne arrange their reunion at Fort Bragg, N.C., home of the 82nd Airborne, where he was stationed then. The unnamed Vietnam veteran didn't forget that help, Hair said.

"This is his way to give back to Monti," he said.

The marker consists of two black granite stones; a squat rectangular base with a tablet stone set upon it. Together the stones weigh more than 4,900 pounds. People from Keystone Memorial of Elberton, Ga. and Query-Pritchard Construction of Barnwell set the monument in place March 31.

The dedication service will have several speakers, including Paul Monti, the

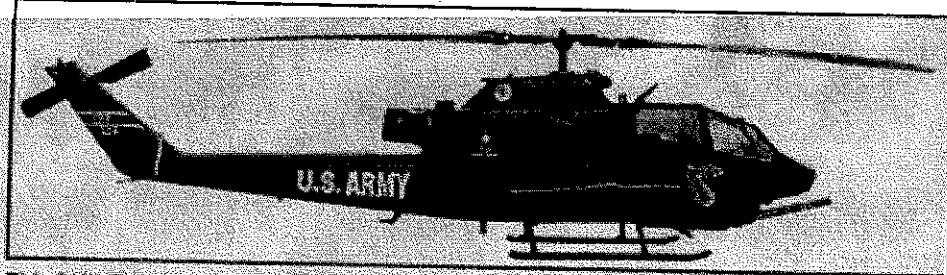
fallen soldier's father; Brig Gen W. Bryan Gamble from Fort Gordon; U.S. Rep. Joe Wilson and Maj. Gen. James Livingston (retired), representing the National Medal of Honor Society in Charleston. Livingston is a Marine and a Medal of Honor recipient for his actions in Vietnam.

Fort Gordon is sending a color guard to render the 21-gun salute and wrap and present the American flag to Monti's father.

An OH-58 Kiowa, similar to ones used by the Army, will perform a flyover during the ceremonies and land at the park. Another helicopter, an AH-1 Cobra that served in Vietnam, will be a static display from the Celebrate Freedom Foundation.



Chris Pritchard, left, and Jetter Strickland guide the top half of the monument into place on the base.



This AH-1 Cobra used in Vietnam will be on display during the April 10 ceremony.